4: Carawan & Carawan B,Z-5 (1959-1988) 1989
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114 123 533 (668) her version, "Keep Your Eyes on the Prize," to young civil rights workers at conferences in 1960. Thus it was that the Johns Island version of this spiritual became one of the great inspirational theme songs of the civil rights movement.

875 874 641 In 1961, prompted by the rapid growth of citizenship schools to other islands and the Charleston area, Septima Clark and Bernice Robinson developed the first program to train citizenship school teachers. This curriculum spread throughout the South as participants came from the Carolinas, Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi, and Tennessee. Thousands of teachers were trained. Such community leaders as Fannie Lou Hamer in Mississippi and Hosea Williams in Georgia went home to teach and to organize voter registration campaigns. They simply refused to put up with segregation anymore. By 1962, when the major civil rights groups turned their attention to voter registration, they were able to use the approach pioneered in the citizenship schools between 1957 and 1961 because by then it was clear that the approach worked. Thus the citizenship schools on Johns Island were the foundation for the voting rights movement and played a major role in the overthrow of Jim Crow.

875 641 871 563 (668) (666)

114 (123) SINCE 1959 Guy had spent part of each year working with the citizenship school on Johns Island. In 1961 Guy married Candie Anderson; and in 1963 they moved to Johns Island with their small son, Evan. During the next two years they shared in the life and fellowship of the black community around Moving Star Hall. Their purpose was to help preserve some of the older black folk culture on the island by bringing honor and recognition to it. As Guy wrote to Pete Seeger in 1965, "These days, you can go to any one of the major folk festivals at Berkeley, UCLA, Chicago, Philadelphia, or Newport and see some of the finest folk talent in the country. But the communities from which these people come have been neglected. Leadbelly and his music are forgotten in Shreveport, Louisiana. I'm hoping our work on Johns Island (South Carolina) will provide an example of what can be done in other areas. It would be a shame to let this music die at the roots." To that end Guy and Candie

114 533 545 (Pix-B)

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545 arranged for the Moving Star Hall Singers to perform their spirituals, folktales, and children's game songs across the country, from the Newport Folk Festival to UCLA. The Carawans produced recordings of the Moving Star Hall Singers, and Guy told of them and sang their songs in his own performances. As a result of Guy and Candie's efforts, the Moving Star Hall Singers became widely recognized across the country as perhaps the preeminent tradition bearers of the oldest layer of African-American cultural expression in living American tradition.

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533 During this period Guy and Candie organized a number of "Sing for Freedom" workshops around the South, cosponsored by Highlander, the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, and the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee. At a three-day gathering in Edwards, Mississippi, for example, young civil rights workers from all over the region came together. There they exchanged
(545) ideas and shared experiences with the Moving Star Hall Singers, the Georgia Sea Island Singers, and traditional singers and instrumentalists from Mississippi. There they swapped songs and learned new verses. Many sea island songs were thus introduced to new areas in the South because of these freedom song gatherings.

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545 Guy and Candie also worked closely with the Johns Island community to produce a series of sea island folk festivals. The folk festivals picked up much of their meaning from the context of all the things that were happening in the sea islands and the South—the citizenship schools, the voter registration drives, the mass demonstrations of the civil rights movement. The festivals did not celebrate a quaint past; they related the past to the present. The festival became the focal point for "pilgrimages" from leading civil rights workers in the South—Vincent Harding, Julius Lester, Bob Moses, Willie Peacock, and Bernice Johnson Reagon. The old songs and stories, the old talk and tales seemed strikingly new and fresh. The traditions of the past had a power to move a generation, a power to call the youth to the task of achieving democracy.

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871 563 the schools were integrated, and St. Johns, previously all white, became the high school for all island youngsters. Many white parents subsequently put their children into a private academy, but for the youth of the black community, St. Johns High offered new hope. Yet today the school system is still lacking. A desegregation suit against the county school system has been in federal court for six years. Brought by the Justice Department with (691) (668) the NAACP, it charges the Charleston County School Board with maintaining segregation and providing inadequate educational opportunities for minority students.

178 FOR NEARLY THIRTY YEARS two things have greatly impressed us about Johns Island. One is the continuing process of community education and struggle that enables local people to maintain some measure of control over their institutions and their lives. The other is the rich Afro-American cultural life on the islands. Given the pressures of development and economic survival, the need to address contemporary issues with sophisticated tactics, what will survive of the older sea island culture? Public interest has certainly grown in coastal culture, language, and history on both a popular and scholarly level. In addition, there have also been patterns of change in the community and the cultural choices made by island people.

• 545 The Moving Star Hall Singers, a family group who began traveling nationally when we lived on Johns Island, continues to travel and to share religious music, folktales, children's game songs, and life experiences in a range of settings. They are widely recognized as outstanding carriers of the oldest layer of Afro-American cultural expression in the United States. In more recent years they have been invited to perform in local situations, including the Spoleto Festival held annually in Charleston. In the summer of 1988 they performed at a national festival of Afro-American arts in Atlanta.

159 In 1984 Mrs. Janie Hunter received a National Heritage Fellowship from the National Endow-

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4: Carawan & Carawan B,Z-5 (1959-1988) 1989
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159 ment for the Arts. Here is how the NEA described her:

159 533 Sea Island people are noted for their retention of African cultural influences and for their creation of a rich body of game, work and religious songs, stories and craft skills. Janie Hunter is the matriarch of a family notable there for its musical artistry. Her voice is as strong and clear as a clarion bell and she carries in her memory a large repertoire of religious songs. Many of these came from her father, Joe Bligen, a fisherman and part-time farmer. Mrs. Hunter is an artistic decision-maker as well as a singer for the Moving Star Hall Singers, a group named for a Praise House on Johns Island.

•[545] The music heard in Moving Star Hall is joyous, a music in celebration of life, freedom, and a deeply felt religious optimism, the dawning of a better world. Mrs. Hunter and her friends and family sing not only with their voices, but with their hands and feet as well.

159 Like many other folk artists, Janie Hunter is multi-talented. She carries in her memory a collection of animal stories. They are for the amusement of children and adults, but they also show the uses of wit and logic. Mrs. Hunter is a maker of quilts and of dolls, a keeper of folk medicine techniques. She learned and remembered all these skills, and she is also an activist and transmitter. She has trained her children and the children of neighbors to respect and keep the beauty and artistic self-sufficiency of an important American place.

Mrs. Hunter felt she represented the island community when she was recognized for her cultural knowledge. When she traveled to Washington to receive the award, a vanload of family and friends from Johns Island went with her and joined in a jubilant shout as part of the Heritage award concert. When she returned to Johns Island, she was honored by her church, Wesley Methodist, and valued as a teacher in their own series on Afro-American heritage. Also recognized that same year by the NEA was a basketmaker from the Charleston lowcountry, Mrs. Mary Jane Manigault.

178 889 The older people will not lose their heritage. It is already too much a part of them. But they have

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4: Carawan & Carawan B,Z-5 (1959-1988) 1989
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Mr. William Saunders

THE CULTURAL THING IS SOMETHING THAT CAN ALWAYS GO ON

When we had the festivals on Johns Island back in the sixties with the folk from Moving Star Hall, the Georgia sea islands, and the young freedom singers, nothing was happening in isolation. It was a time in history when a lot was going on—voter registration, awareness, blacks were about being black. Everything fit in, and the festival was like the tape that brings a lot of things together. It really kept people's spirits up, and that is what was needed at that particular time. We needed to draw on each other. The religious aspect of it was key. Most of the white community around here really don't understand the strength of something like that.

For instance, the Hospital Workers' strike just grew out of that whole thing. The same singing went on in all the things we were organizing. It never changed. It stayed the same. The song is sung according to the mood of the people that day. And very rarely the same words are used. The tempo is different depending on whether it's sad or happy. You cannot really capture that.

I think the festivals we did were really a benefit and a strength to the community itself. It was the only legitimate place that blacks and whites could get together. Everybody enjoyed themselves and it was part of our expression for that time. It would not be workable today, because all of those things are not in place anymore. You would have to have a different reason.

Now you would have it based on culture. If it were to be more than that, that thrust would have to be defined. When we did it back in the sixties, the political thrust was already there. We knew exactly who our enemy was. We didn't have any question about what was right and what was wrong.

But the cultural thing is something that can always go on. And there are so many young people that have been left out of that era. So if you do it from a historical perspective, it's workable.

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668 533 114 secretary and native of the Nashville sit-ins, brought some of us together and told us that a white folk singer was coming to lead us in songs. I was also told that, though he might sound different, we were not to laugh when he sang because he was a true friend of the movement and had been tested and tried during the sit-ins in Nashville. Well, the singer was Guy Carawan, who immediately pulled out his guitar and began to play and sing. I remember hearing for the first time songs such as "Where Have All the Flowers Gone?," "Wasn't That a Time!," and hearing the name of Pete Seeger and the Weavers. I remember experiencing no feelings for the soft, flowing ballad style of "Flowers." But when Guy sang "Ol' Blue," he hit familiar territory. None of us had heard the song, but we could feel the story. We requested it over and over again.

Guy spent the rest of the week with us and accompanied us on our freedom songs. He later showed up again and again in mass meetings all over the South and asked me to help him organize several workshops that brought songleaders from the movement together with traditional singers such as Doc Reese from Texas and the Georgia Sea Island Singers from St. Simons Island with singers and song organizers from the topical and folk song revival from the North. Len Chandler, Alan Lomax, Theo Bikel, Phil Ochs, and Tom Paxton were new names we learned during this time.

114 529 533 545 Then in December 1964 Guy and his wife, Candie, invited us, the Freedom Singers from Atlanta, to a festival on Johns Island. There we met Esau Jenkins, who took us to the Progressive Club and a singing. The Georgia Sea Island Singers were there and I heard the Moving Star Hall Singers for the first time. I had never heard or seen this song style before. Led by Janie Hunter and Benjamin Bligen, the singing sounded ancient and the shouting and rhythms more complex than anything I had ever attempted myself.

533 I will never forget the waves of sounds sweeping into each response after a call by Benjie, or

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9: Parrish B-4,5 (ca.1916-1941) 1942
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533 If the black tenants on a plantation surprise its owner with the finish of their
• 545 performance, he may feel inclined to organize a society, put the entertainments they give on a more permanent basis, and hold singing contests between members of different churches, denominations, communities, plantations, or counties, as was done in our section.

Years ago I found it expedient to form the Spiritual Singers Society of Coastal Georgia, and in 1934 to organize another society, called The Plantation Singers, which specializes in secular songs. This was done to help restore the prestige which the slave songs once enjoyed. Friends generously gave trophies for each type of folksong, and both societies have accomplished precisely what it was hoped they would. Only vouched-for singers of the old songs are eligible for membership, and their names are enrolled in a record book. Buttons, with the name of the society around the rim, have been given out to well-nigh a thousand singers along the ~~Coastal Highway~~, from the Ogeechee River to the Florida line. These buttons proclaim to the world that the men, women, and children who wear them are proud to sing the old songs. There is nothing like the weight of numbers to add importance to any movement! Big "Star Singer" buttons distinguish the leaders, and provide the incentive needed to overcome shyness, and to bring them into the limelight. [434] Incidentally, in the division of the proceeds—every penny of which goes to the Negroes—the leaders are given twenty-five or fifty cents more than the basers.

533 The particular value of our "sings" lies in the likelihood of impressing a large
545 number of Negroes with the high regard in which their music is held by white
179 people of importance. In 1934, the annual festival at the Sea Island Casino brought out an audience of over three hundred. It is readily seen that one hundred and twenty-five singers, from Negro communities a hundred miles apart, can act as missionaries in carrying word to their neighbors of how the white folks behave when they want a song repeated, of how they sometimes yell: "Bravo! Bravo!"—whatever that means—and that they pay real money to hear Negroes sing.

533 Except on one occasion, it has always been possible to send the singers home
545 with a dollar in the hand and their transportation paid. At the festival, held during
[434] the dark days of the bank moratorium of March, 1933, the singers were thankful to get fifty cents, food, and all expenses. That was a memorable night. A tall Negro from Broadfield—making the "Sign of the Judgment" with uplifted arm—led the [187] sixty swaying singers in the shout: "Can't Hide." They began to move quietly, as

9: Parrish B-4,5 (ca.1916-1941) 1942
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in a trance, and it was soon evident, from a peculiar heart-clutching quality in the rhythm, that they were "possessed" by it. Song followed song, and the spell was not broken. Some in the audience wept, others applauded, but the Negroes appeared unaware of their surroundings. Several middle-aged Southerners said it was the first time they had seen the Negroes "get happy." Although the performance was strictly decorous, I was frankly relieved when the participants came to earth, after a third call for:

> My God is a rock in a weary lan'
> A weary lan', 'n a weary lan'
> A weary lan', I know He's a rock 'n a weary lan'
> Shelter in a time of storm.[22]

What the future holds for this music—the only distinctive form, besides that of the Indian, that has been developed in America—remains to be seen. If plantation owners will lend a hand and provide the rural singers with appreciative audiences, the chances are that it will survive and enable the younger generation of composers—to whom I notice it has a particular appeal—to utilize it as a stepping stone for further development. Melody and harmony, instead of being stressed as they now are in Negro colleges, will fall into line with rhythm and architectural form which formerly characterized the music of the slave. The result may perhaps be a new type of music—of which there is serious need. The classic system, through being confined to the development of one musical form to the exclusion of all others, is clearly in need of rejuvenation. Such was the case with the plastic arts in the first two years of the twentieth century, when the primitive sculpture of the African Negro provided the necessary stimulation. It is freely admitted that there is a cloud over the music world today; and writers of music, in their struggle to create something original, are moving from the library to the laboratory in search of new notes, new scales, new tonalities, new harmonies. I would suggest going farther afield, and trying out what Africa has to offer. It is a curious fact, however, that musicians are not adventurous, and few wander far from the beaten track. According to W. E. Ward, who has lived for years in Africa and has made a particular study of its music, that of the West Coast has many more tricks than the one or two obvious ones which have been utilized by Tin Pan Alley. Present-day composers might advantageously follow the lead he indicates.

[22] An indication of the chastened spirit of the audience.